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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JEDDAH 000453

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHARAHAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP;
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TAGS: EAIR ECON KISL KWMN PREL SA SOCI

SUBJECT: JEDDAH JOURNAL 15: JCCI TURMOIL ENDS; CONVICTION
OF SAUDI IN U.S. CONDEMNED AS ISLAMOPHOBIA; WIFE PROCURES
SECOND WIFE FOR HUSBAND; BUSINESSWOMEN ORGANIZING; LIBYAN
AIRLINE LANDS IN JEDDAH; FOOTBALL AND SAUDI YOUTH; WEBSITE
INSTRUCTS JIHADISTS

REF: JEDDAH 427

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

NEW CHAIRMAN OF JCCI NOMINATED

¶1. (U) Ending several months of controversy (reftel), the Consulate learned from a contact on July 1, that embattled Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) Chairman, Engineer Abdullah Yehia Al-Moallemi, had resigned, formally citing a disagreement over management style with the Board as the reason. Surprisingly, Moallemi resigned his seat as a member of the Board of Directors, as well. The consensus is that Salah Bin Ali al-Turki will be the new Chairman and Sheikh Abdul Khalig Said will be appointed to fill the remainder of Moallemi's term on the Board, if approved by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

CONVICTION OF SAUDI FOR ABUSE IN AMERICA BRINGS CHARGES OF "ISLAMOPHOBIA" IN SAUDI ARABIA

¶2. (U) The July 2 edition of the English language "Saudi Gazette" carried the story of Homaidan Al-Turki who had been convicted in Colorado for sexually abusing a young Indonesian maid and keeping her prisoner in his house for four years. However, appended to the wire-service story was a lengthy segment describing the conviction as another example of American "Islamophobia."

¶3. (C) The local version of the article quoted Sultan Al-Angari, who is described as a Saudi writer and expert in criminal law, condemning the conviction as an example of religious and cultural discrimination. Al-Angari said "The man (Al-Turki) looks so religious and was accompanied by his wife to the US, making it almost impossible for him to commit such a crime because no wife would ever accept such a thing."

After presenting this reasoned defense of al-Turki he attacked the maid's veracity, and then asserted: "Accusing a Muslim man of such a crime is meant to humiliate him as well as Muslims all over the world. Everyone knows Islam's stand on both rape and adultery." He also suggested that the trial was politically motivated. COMMENT: Clearly, this Saudi expert in criminal law does not read the domestic papers which are replete with accounts of rape and sexual abuse of Asian domestics, often in the presence of cowed Saudi wives.

But from the broader perspective, this is another example of the growing and troubling trend for Muslims to dismiss any criticism of or wrong-doing by Muslims as Islamophobia. END COMMENT.

U.S. PREJUDICE JUSTIFIES CANCELING SCHOLARSHIPS

¶4. (U) Al Angari censured the Colorado jurors as well. "The jury are common people who might be affected by the media as well as the recent attempts to damage the image of Muslims in the West." Al-Angari then called on the Saudi government to suspend its program of providing scholarships to students to study in America, complaining that "if this is what happened to a mature, well-educated, married man, what could happen to teenagers coming from such a closed society?" Mansour Ghawani, identified in the article as head of the graduate studies department at Taiba University, also called from Saudi students to seek education outside of the United States, saying "We have to limit the scholarships to the U.S. We have to protect our children, even if it means shutting down scholarship programs."

FAMILY WEBSITE RALLIES SUPPORTERS WITH CRY OF CULTURAL PREJUDICE

¶5. (C) According to the report, the al-Turki family has established a website rallying supporters with allegations of prejudice. One unidentified Saudi lawyer is reported as stating that in this case the prosecutors overlooked Saudi and Islamic culture. "The case," the lawyer asserted, "would have been completely different if the case was looked at without discrimination or prejudice." COMMENT: Apparently, Saudis reading the article, cannot understand how people in

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the United States could suspect any wrong doing within a family that admitted they allowed their maid to sleep on a mattress in an unfinished basement and paid her more than \$1.50 a day. END COMMENT.

FIRST WIFE RECRUITS SECOND WIFE

¶6. (U) Jeddah Political Assistant forwarded a story originating from Jizan, near the Yemen border. According to the source, a 30 year-old Saudi woman with 3 children residing in that city, proposed to a second wife on behalf of her husband. The prospective bride asked for a large dowry and the first wife is reported to have willingly sold all of her jewelry to pay the dowry. The husband, who had been cool to the idea of taking a second wife, relented at that point and recently married the proffered bride. COMMENT: One is forced to wonder if the motive for this generous act was to procure a young wife for the husband or peace and quiet for the first wife. END COMMENT.

JEDDAH BUSINESSWOMEN COMING TOGETHER

¶7. (U) Saudi Arabian businesswomen are demonstrating remarkable activity and organization. Not only is the JCCI providing a semi-official source for cooperation at its Khadeejah Bint Khuwailed Women's Center (KBK) under its new director (septel), but the consulate has just heard that the former General Manager of KBK, Nadia Baa'shen, and Samira Bitar, owner of "2gether Marketing," are trying to found the first Saudi Businesswomen's Association.

LIBYAN AIRLINE TO CONNECT JEDDAH WITH WEST AFRICA

¶8. (U) The "Arab News" on June 29 carried a short note stating that Mohamed Elmeshkhy, General Director for Saudi Arabia, for newly-established, privately-owned Afriqiyah

Airways, which is based in Libya, will now offer two flights per week between Jeddah and West African destinations through their hub in Tripoli. From Tripoli, flights will also be available to Europe. Elmeshkhy also announced that Afriqiyah has an "interline agreement" with Saudia to route West African travelers to Asian cities.

SAUDI YOUTHS TO BE SAVED FROM CORRUPTING EFFECTS OF FOOTBALL

¶9. (U) A brief article in Asharq Alawsat last week reported that the Department for Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice (the Mutawa, otherwise known as the Religious Police) had banned youths under the age of 18 from watching the World football championship at public cafes. This was done to prevent young Saudis from misbehavior that may occur at such establishments. The article was accompanied by a photograph of a cafe with one of the announcements plastered on the wall.

SAUDI YOUTHS LOVE SOCCER MORE THAN RELIGION

¶10. (U) It must be asked if the above noted restriction was prompted by an incident reported on the Arabic-language website Elaph about a week earlier. The report states that in a cafe showing the football matches, the young patrons yelled at the waiters when they turned off the television during prayer time. The waiters balked at their patrons' demand, insisting that the Mutawas had ordered them to turn off the television and close the doors during prayer times. This explanation failed to placate the rabid fans, and the web-site reports that the television was back on "in less than three minutes."

WEBSITE PROVIDES INSTRUCTIONS TO WOULD-BE JIHADISTS

¶11. (U) In a far more unsettling message on the web-site Al Saha, a Mohamed Sa'eed called for a Jihad in Palestine and explained how recruits could get to Palestine. He told readers to go to Egypt through the airport and hire a cab to Rafa'h. From thence, according to the writer, the Bedouin will gladly guide the traveler through tunnels into Gaza. And a half-hour later one can be fighting along side other Mujahedeen.

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Gfoeller